

O 280740Z JAN 09
FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6674
INFO SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUSAKA 000057

STATE FOR AF, ADDIS FOR AU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/28/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#) [ZA](#)

SUBJECT: PERSPECTIVES FROM ZAMBIA ON ZIMBABWE SITUATION

REF: 08 LUSAKA 1183

Classified By: Ambassador Donald E. Booth, reasons 1.4, b/d.

¶1. (C) Summary: In various conversations over the past week, President Banda, COMESA Secretary General Ngwenya, and Patriotic Front Deputy Leader Scott have all suggested to us or the UK High Commission that a direct high level U.S. or UK approach to Mugabe is needed to break the political impasse in Zimbabwe. The key, something echoed by Zambian civil society leaders, is that Mugabe needs assurances for him and his followers that they can pursue a dignified exit from power and need not fear retribution or prosecution. End Summary

¶2. (C) President Banda: UK High Commissioner briefed Ambassador on his January 23 meeting with President Banda in which he (and a colleague from South Africa) provided Banda an intelligence briefing on the Zimbabwe situation. According to the High Commissioner, Banda made the following points: 1) western sanctions are not helpful because Mugabe and others believe the individuals targeted by the sanctions are individuals the "West" wants to see stand trial in The Hague; 2) a solution must include a formula that forgets the past, such as the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission process; 3) it is reasonable for Tsvangirai to demand the release of MDC cadres prior to further negotiations because Mugabe had made (successfully) the same demand in 1979 at the beginning of the Lancaster House talks; 4) Mbeki has been one-sided in his approach because he perceived Mugabe as immovable and thus felt the only way to make progress was to push Tsvangirai to make concessions; 5) ZANU-PF (Comment: Perhaps Banda also) perceives that the "white settlers" back MDC, as they see MDC as a means to get their land back, and thus the West supports MDC too; and 6) it will be very difficult for anyone in the region to take active efforts to unseat Mugabe, a liberation hero for Africans, as doing so will be seen as following the British agenda. Banda expressed concern about the impact on Zambia should Zimbabwe slide into civil war. He also told the UK High Commissioner that he is upset with Tsvangirai for failing to visit Zambia as planned back in December.

¶3. (C) Comment: When he met with Ambassador just before Christmas (reftel), Banda was quite firm in the position that Tsvangirai should take the SADC deal (rotating control of the Home Affairs Ministry) in order to form a government and thus leave Mugabe a face saving way to cede power. It is interesting that he offered the UK High Commissioner no clear ideas on a way forward now. What seemingly has not changed is Banda's belief that public Western pressure on Mugabe to leave makes it harder for/less likely that Mugabe will do so. End Comment

¶4. (C) COMESA Secretary General Ngwenya (a Zimbabwean): In a recent one-on-one conversation with Ambassador, Ngwenya made the following points: 1) Mugabe knows time is not on his side, as South African policy will be less accommodating if Zuma is elected in April as expected; 2) Mugabe is too proud to back down under public pressure or on his own and will not

make concessions to MDC without "outside assurances"; and - most interestingly - 3) Mugabe is looking for a call from the U.S. or UK to offer him assurances against prosecution/retribution - both within Zimbabwe (Mugabe is mindful of the 5th Brigade's brutal repression in Matabeleland in the 1980s), as well as from outside courts. Ngwenya said he believes that if Mugabe was approached directly at a high level by the USG or HMG, he could be convinced to make concessions so the power-sharing deal can be concluded, and thus pave the way for him (Mugabe) to quietly cede power.

15. (C) Patriotic Front (opposition party) Deputy Leader Guy Scott: In a lunch meeting hosted by Ambassador on January 26, Scott raised the issue of Zimbabwe and said SADC mediation will not succeed; it's time for U.S. or UK to call Mugabe, insist the current situation is unacceptable and ask Mugabe directly what he needs to fade away and let the rebuilding of Zimbabwe commence.

16. (SBU) Zambian Civil Society: DCM hosted a lunch for Zambian civil society leaders on January 27 to discuss Zimbabwe. The group was almost uniformly negative in their assessment of Tsvangirai, whom they characterized as a political opportunist and potential thief, much like Zambia's champion of democracy from the labor movement - second president Frederick Chiluba - turned out to be. The civil society leaders seemed convinced that Tsvangirai's character and motives are at the root of much of the delay in finding a solution to the current impasse. They suggested that Tsvangirai needed to abandon the "power agenda" that he is "pursuing at the expense of the Zimbabwean people" and effect change from within a government of national unity. While they agreed Mugabe needs to go, they thought that he will need some deal "sweeteners" that would guarantee his dignity as he transitions out of power.

17. (C) UK Position: According to the UK High Commissioner, he made the following points to Banda: 1) donors are poised to assist Zimbabwe's recovery, but it is not enough just for Tsvangirai to join a government; donors need to see a commitment by the Zim government to macro economic stability, respect for the rule of law and restoration of the democratic process; 2) SADC and its members must play the central role in delivering change and reform in Zimbabwe; and 3) it is important for Zambia and other SADC countries to exert influence on South Africa to break the status quo in Zimbabwe.

18. (C) Comment: It is interesting that three parties who share little in common have all concluded that direct high-level U.S. and/or UK engagement with Mugabe is the key to securing Mugabe's flexibility to resolve the current impasse and his willingness to quietly cede power. It is rather disappointing that Zambian civil society has bought into the Tsvangirai is the obstacle to progress mind set. We will continue to work to change that. End Comment

BOOTH